



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, July 31 – August 7, 2009

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

Boyd and Edgley are continuing to trap to place a collar in the Cilly pack in the Swan Valley.

Flights: Lance flew in the Big Hole on 8/4. Laudon flew in northwest Montana on 8/4 and 8/5.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

As of 7/27, WS had confirmed additional domestic sheep losses since 7/21 in the Rock Creek area south of Dillon. The tally is near 25 bucks. WS and sheep owners in the area have reported 2 blacks and 1 gray leaving the sheep and this is the same number and coloration of wolves seen in the Sweetwater where other sheep depredations occurred in recent weeks. FWP had made a new decision and requested removal of all three wolves. One wolf was killed on 7/27, one wolf was killed was mortally wounded. Efforts are ongoing. If additional wolves are seen, WS will attempt to collar a wolf.

On 8/3, IDWS confirmed that wolves killed 7 buck sheep on the ID sheep experiment station near Humphrey in the same area as previous losses occurred on 6/10, 7/16, and 8/3. FWP had authorized removal of up to three adult wolves, which was completed by ID WS on 8/4.

On 8/6, 2 cow cattle were reported injured in the Murphy Lake pack territory and near the packs rendezvous site. On 8/8 3 other carcasses are reported in the same general area. A WS agent will investigate on 8/8. One other dead and 2 other injured have been reported in the same area over 2-3 weeks ago, but could not be confirmed (the carcass was completely consumed and the injured could not be relocated).

On 8/7, WS confirmed one calf as injured by wolves on public land, the calf is expected to not live. This incident is linked with the Horse Prairie pack southwest of Dillon. On the FWP monitoring flight this week the pack was in the same area and mixed in with cattle. WS has been authorized to lethally remove one wolf from the pack.

Efforts to collar a wolf in the Elk Park area north of Butte concluded this week. In the last 45 days, no wolves were captured / collared and no further reports of injured or dead livestock were confirmed. Traps had been pulled as of July 12, and no additional wolf sightings have been received.

Outreach and Education

On 8/1, FWP Sime, WS Steuber, and MLLRMB Edwards attended a meeting of the Montana Cattlemen's Association. Each provided updates and answered questions from their respective roles and responsibilities. About 30 people attended.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

Nothing to report.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation

On 7/27, FWP mailed its motion and brief (the supporting document filed concurrent with the motion to intervene) to intervene in the delisting lawsuit in Missoula Federal Court. On 7/31, the Court granted Montana / FWP's request to intervene. Montana/FWP's participation in the lawsuit will support the federal delisting decision that took effect May 4, only from Montana's unique perspective and role. Among other aspects, Montana/FWP legal efforts will represent Montana's interest in conserving and managing resident wildlife (in this case, the recovered wolf population). The next step in the litigation is to finalize the timeline under which the case will proceed. The timeline, once established, will determine deadlines for filing information with the Court and possible hearing dates. At this time, no request for an injunction has been filed. Such a request could be filed at any time, however, and Montana / FWP would be notified if a request were to be filed.

Despite ongoing litigation and unless otherwise directed by the Federal Court, FWP is still the lead agency. FWP carries out wolf conservation and management (as a resident wildlife species classified as a species in need of management and thus mortality is regulated statewide), as outlined by Montana law, administrative rules, and the federally-approved state wolf plan. See the FWP Wolf Web Page for a Fact Sheet and answers to frequently asked questions about delisting. The FWP Wolf Web Page also has information about state law and regulations and what livestock owners can do to protect livestock. See: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Background: On June 2, a coalition of 13 groups, represented by the law firm EarthJustice, challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9th Circuit). The complaint alleges the USFWS delisting decision was an arbitrary and capricious violation of the federal Endangered Species Act for a variety of reasons. The Greater Yellowstone Coalition also filed a lawsuit challenging the federal delisting decision. The groups will be represented by their own attorney's, respectively, but the cases were consolidated by the Court. Additionally, the State of Wyoming filed a lawsuit in the 10th Circuit (Cheyenne Wyoming) challenging USFWS's rejection of Wyoming's regulatory framework and state plan.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season:

FWP continues to prepare for a 2009 wolf season with the awareness that developments in the delisting litigation could prevent the season from occurring. FWP encourages the public to check the FWP Wolf Page and the FWP Hunting Page often for the latest news and updates. The FWP Commission approved final 2009 wolf hunting season quotas on July 8. The statewide quota is distributed across 3 Wolf Management Units (41 in northwest Montana, 22 in western Montana, and 12 in southwest Montana). In addition, FWP recommended and the Commission approved a subunit subquota of two wolves for the North Fork Flathead drainage on the west side of Glacier National Park which applies towards the total quota for WMU 1 of 41. The season structure previously adopted by the FWP Commission is still in place.

FWP begin selling 2009 wolf hunting licenses on August 31. Because the wolf hunting season is designed as a quota-based system, any interested hunter (resident or non-resident) can participate by purchasing a conservation license and a wolf hunting license through the online system, at any FWP office, or at other license providers. Wolf mortality will be closely monitored through a 12-hour, mandatory reporting requirement when a hunter is successful. A wolf management unit will close upon reaching the quota or the season closing dates, whichever is first. A hunter may hunt wolves in any of the three wolf management units (or the North Fork Subunit of WMU 1) and so long as the season is open – meaning the total quota has not been reached or up until the season closing date of November 29, 2009. A wolf management unit will be closed upon 24-hour notice when the quota has been reached. If the wolf quota in any particular wolf management unit has not been reached by the close of the general deer/elk season (Nov. 29), wolf hunting could resume beginning December 1 and extend through December 31 – but no more than 25% of the total quota for that individual wolf management unit may be lawfully harvested during the month of December. Hunters will be able to obtain quota and harvest closure information through a telephone hotline.

FWP has published the Final 2009 Wolf Hunting Regulations on the FWP website. Additional information about the wolf hunting season will be available in the next few weeks. In the meantime, the regulations can be found at <http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/regulations.html>. Licenses are scheduled to go on sale August 31. License sales and the 2009 hunting season could yet be affected by the delisting litigation. Check for updates and the most current information on the FWP Web Site.

Other: FWP is inviting hunters, landowners, outfitters, and others to get involved earlier than ever before to help set hunting seasons for the next two years (2010 and 2011). FWP is more formally asking the public for input on things they'd like to see changed or considered for any upcoming big game or upland game bird hunting season before FWP develops tentative regulation proposals. Public comment will be accepted August 4 – September 4. See fwp.mt.gov to comment online or attend one of 7 open houses on August 27 at any FWP Regional Office, 6-9pm.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.

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